

# Nadler, Menendez, and Schwartz Unveil Legislation to Strengthen Amtrak, Improve Rail Service

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NEW YORK, NY &ndash; Congressmen Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), three members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee who hail from cities in the heart of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, today unveiled legislation to strengthen Amtrak. The True Reinvestment for Amtrak Infrastructure in the 21st Century (TRAIN 21) Act will provide proper funding for the rail system and establish a capital improvement program that will improve service for rail passengers.

"The goals of our plan are simple: run more trains, run them faster, and run them on time," Rep. Menendez said. "Strengthening Amtrak does not require exotic new solutions or massive new investments, but it takes a national commitment to rail that has been lacking in the past. For the strength of our economy and the quality of our communities, our legislation makes that commitment."

Amtrak has come under a withering assault from the Bush Administration, which has proposed dividing the system into pieces, gutting funding for capital projects, and forcing the states to pick up the tab.

"The Bush administration has neglected Amtrak from the beginning, and now they're trying to destroy it entirely &ndash; but I don't intend to stand by as this lifeline is dismantled," Rep. Nadler said. "The bill that we're introducing keeps Amtrak whole and finally provides administrators with the stable financial support they need to make the system a success for riders and a sound investment for taxpayers."

"Business leaders across the country understand the vital need for Amtrak, and they have begun to rally behind Amtrak," said Rep. Schwartz. "For example, the CEO Council for Growth, part of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce is actively showing their support for Amtrak, because they recognize the rail system as a vital business asset."

The TRAIN 21 Act funds the existing Amtrak system at \$2 billion per year for six years, up from \$1.2 billion today. The additional funding will allow Amtrak to meet its capital, operating and security needs nationwide and address the maintenance needs of the Northeast corridor, which Amtrak has been forced to repeatedly defer because of budget cuts.

In addition, the legislation will also allocate \$500 million per year for infrastructure improvements in four designated corridors, and will create a matching fund for states similar to that used in the federal highway program. The legislation creates a Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation (RIFC) to sell \$3 billion in rail infrastructure improvement bonds to finance the new capital improvements. Improving Amtrak's infrastructure will yield improved service for passengers by allowing for more trains which run faster and more reliably.

"For years, Amtrak has been treated like the ugly stepchild of our transportation system, with just enough funding to scrape by from year to year. As a result, equipment goes bad, trains don't run on time, service suffers and ridership goes down. With our legislation, the federal government will finally make a commitment to a national system of intercity passenger rail," Menendez concluded.

Congressman Nadler joined Congressman Menendez to unveil the legislation at a news conference at Penn Station in New York, before Menendez continued on to news conferences at Penn Station in Newark and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, where he was joined by Congresswoman Schwartz.

Nadler and Menendez are members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Rail Subcommittee. Schwartz, a standout freshman representative, is a new member of the Transportation Committee.

#### Key Points of the Nadler/Menendez/Schwartz Amtrak Plan

- Amtrak is kept whole. There is no separation of infrastructure from operations along the Northeast Corridor, nor geographical separation into different companies, nor new intercity passenger rail carriers introduced.
- The goal of this bill is to improve intercity rail service in the United States. Reorganization or "reform" by themselves will not fix what ails Amtrak. Intercity passenger rail services worldwide require government subsidies. Some international rail "reform" efforts have been disastrous.
- The real problem behind intercity passenger rail service in this country is the lack of stable financial support, and the lack of appropriate rail infrastructure. Before we can think about new rail technologies, we have to stabilize and improve the existing system. This means improving service.
- Improving service means running trains more frequently and dependably, and reducing trip time. When this happens, ridership increases. California is a prime example.
- Funding for the existing Amtrak system is authorized at \$2 billion per year for six years, which will allow Amtrak to meet its capital, operating, and security needs nationwide, as well as address the deferred maintenance needs of the Northeast Corridor.
- To provide service improvements in other parts of the country, a new capital program has to be instituted that will provide for stable, long-term financial support.
- A Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation (RIFC) will be created and will sell \$3 billion in rail infrastructure improvement bonds to finance this new program.
- \$500 million/year will be allocated for infrastructure improvements in four specified corridors, with the money able to be spent over 6 years.
- States will put up 20% of the funding, and will be reimbursed by RIFC — similar to how the highway program works.
- The Secretary of Transportation will approve projects on the four corridors, and the RIFC board (made up of representatives of labor, passenger groups, freight rail, States, and financial institutions) will award the grants.
- The four corridors are: Southeast (DC to Jacksonville), Midwest (Chicago to Minneapolis, Detroit, and St. Louis), California (Coastal and Inland), and Pacific Northwest (Eugene to Vancouver).

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